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UP-STREAM

By Clifford Bax

OXFORD: BASIL BLACKWELL,
AT THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD

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Drama No. 3

Up Stream

Clifford Bax

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UP STREAM

A Drama in Three Acts

by Clifford Bax

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Scene and Characters

SCENE: *San Antonio, up the Amazon River.*

TIME: *January* 10*th and* 11*th*, 1876.

GEORGE GILLESPIE (48), Chief Engineer of an expedition for the opening up of Bolivia.

HENRY HOOKER (26), a small, insignificant and irresolute man; one of Gillespie's engineers.

JONATHAN WISE (50), Doctor.

RUDOLF GOTTMANN (33), clerk to Gillespie.

ARTHUR WYATT (26), Naturalist.

GARCIA SORIANO (52), a Brazilian Engineer.

GILDA (20), Ward of Gillespie: a Spanish American

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Up Stream

SCENE:—*Interior of the General Store at San Antonio. It is kept by* GEORGE GILLESPIE. *A large room constructed of wood. On the right is a door that leads into another room. At the back is a door that leads toward the forest. Both these doors, and the narrow windows also, are made of a copper network so close that it will exclude mosquitoes. Between the two doors, in a corner of the room, is a rough table, covered with small engineering and surveying implements. Above it hangs a large manuscript map of the Amazon from its mouth at Pará to the borders of Bolivia. A larger table stands well forward, to the left centre, and at this table, to its left, sits* GEORGE GILLESPIE, *puffing at a cigar that has gone out. In front of him sits* HENRY HOOKER, *nervously picking at the rough bark of the table.*

GILLESPIE [*frowning at his cigar*]. Damn! It's gone out. Give me a match.

HOOKER [*eagerly*]. Yes, of course—here.

GILLESPIE [*lighting up*]. Now—Hooker—you've got to brush yourself up.

HOOKER. I'm sorry, boss. I can't control them somehow. You see, I'm not used to niggers.

GILLESPIE. You came from New York?

HOOKER. That's right.

GILLESPIE. And what was your job in New York? What did you do,—before you made that unfortunate slip, I mean? Taught in the Sunday School, eh? Well, there's nothing of that sort here, Hooker. I've no use for haloes. Fact is, we don't care a toothpick what day of the week it is. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday—they're all one when it takes you a week by water to get to your nearest town. But why are you here, do you think? To admire the jungle? To catch the butterflies? Eh? You're not on a pleasure-jaunt.

HOOKER. I know, boss, I'm sorry.

GILLESPIE. Sorry, sorry! That won't put a railway-line through a thousand miles of timber. Look here, my friend, I'll be candid. You're a deal too soft for my job.

HOOKER. I suppose that's it.

GILLESPIE. I'm tackling a job that nobody else'd take on—

HOOKER. And you'll do it. You're just the man.

GILLESPIE. Thanks. I know that. I'm going to drive this railway through thick and thin to Bolivia. Bolivia, man—that's the wealthiest country on this old planet of ours. I tell you, there's more money in the mines out there than in all the States together, with London and Paris thrown in! But no one can set it moving. They can't bring it over the Andes and they can't bring it out through the forest. That's *my* job. That's

what I'm here to bring off; and in three years' time I shall ride direct to Bolivia by the line that I've laid myself!

HOOKER. Three years! Why, in one we shall all be dead!

GILLESPIE. Malaria? That's a toss-up.

HOOKER. Fifteen of us dead already, poor chaps—and all those niggers. But I'm thinking more of this forest.

GILLESPIE. What's wrong with the forest? It's hardly a health-resort, but you don't escape from it, Hooker,—not at this end. The door's in Bolivia.

HOOKER. The forest's a frightful place,—a green hell, that's what it is. It gets on my nerves.

GILLESPIE. Nerves!

HOOKER. I can't stand the size of it, and the stillness. Green, green, green,—it'll drive me crazy.

GILLESPIE. I daresay it will. But business, Hooker, business! I've made up my mind about you. I'm going to try strong measures. If you can't get the niggers to work, you must pay the price. Gottmann,—look at Gottmann! When I put that fellow in charge they do more in a day than they'll do for you in a month. And it isn't as though it were Gottmann's job. He's a clerk, not an engineer.

HOOKER. I know.—Boss, why won't they work for me?

GILLESPIE. Would they work for their little sister? You've no guts. There's only one way with niggers,—drive them, curse them, kick them about. They enjoy it.

HOOKER. They're men,—they're men like us.

GILLESPIE. Considering what I'm going to say, it's lucky you hold that opinion. I don't. Now listen to me. The provision-ship won't be back here for a couple of months at least. So you can't make off—unless you fly to the jungle . . .

HOOKER. My God, no! Never.

GILLESPIE. Well, you've shown that you can't be a man, you've shown that you can't make the devils work dry, and now, do you guess what I mean to do?

HOOKER. No. What?

GILLESPIE [*looking up sharply*]. You shall work as one of them,—you!

HOOKER. You don't mean that, boss? I'm—I'm a white man.

GILLESPIE. There's no mantelpiece here,and I don't need ornaments. You can't make them work; well, you must work among them!

HOOKER. I say, though—

GILLESPIE. Quit now! I'm busy.

HOOKER. But they'd learn of this at the Base.

GILLESPIE [*looking through papers*]. Oh, I daresay.

HOOKER. Well, aren't you afraid?

GILLESPIE. What the deuce would *they* care? I bet

they don't know you're here. They're not missionaries—the Directors. They don't want to save your soul. They want money,—that's all,—money! To-morrow, at dawn, you go with the gang. I shall visit the points as usual, and note how you're doing.

HOOKER [*turning to go*]. I don't know, really—

GILLESPIE. Stop!—You've heard that Jim Mortlake died?

HOOKER. Up there, in the jungle,—yes.

GILLESPIE. What do the men say of that?

HOOKER. You're not serious about me, boss . . . ?

GILLESPIE. What do they say of Mortlake's death?

HOOKER. Young Wyatt's a bit upset. They were pals.

GILLESPIE. But the rest,—do they blame *me?*

HOOKER. I don't know, really.

GILLESPIE. But you heard them talk last night when the news came in?

HOOKER. I'm not very popular here.

GILLESPIE. No, no, of course not.—Get along.

HOOKER. Ah, Doctor!

[*Opening the door he encounters* DR JONATHAN WISE, *a seared and cynical man whose ways are kinder than his opinions.*

WISE. 'Evening, Hooker.

GILLESPIE. Come in, come in; and we'll have a drink. Lassie! Gilda!

[*As he calls, he goes to the door, R.*

WISE. Hold on, Hooker. Devil of a hurry to say good-bye. Hot half-hour, eh? Sharp words? Let's have a look at you.—Not used to the tropics, are you?

HOOKER. Doctor, it isn't the yellow fever? This forest's a hideous trap. Have I caught it, doctor? Those flies! I wish I'd never joined.

WISE. You're a fool, Hooker.

HOOKER. I've got it,—my God!

WISE. Not a sign of it,—yet.

HOOKER. Thank Heaven for that! [*Exit.*

WISE [*advancing into the room*]. All things come to him who waits,—on the Amazon.

GILLESPIE [*returning*]. Well, doctor—

WISE. Nerves, Gillespie. Go off his head one day, wet or fine.

GILLESPIE. And a good riddance!

WISE. Queer devils—men. Can't die at home like Christians, tucked up in their cots. Come out to an inconvenient hole like this where the river's your only undertaker. What brought *him?*

GILLESPIE. Hooker? Oh, says he was a bank clerk, but the silly fool helped in a forgery.

WISE [*with pantomime*]. Trial—black cap—prison.

GILLESPIE. Two years. We've a lot of dark sheep in our flock.

WISE. Weak-minded ass! Couldn't get work after that, I suppose? Dear little world we're in.

GILLESPIE. He's holding up *my* work with his

curs'd incompetence: but he's going to sweat.—Have a cigar?

WISE. Thanks.—New?

GILLESPIE. That's it. They came with the *Abraham Lincoln* this morning. She looked smart enough to-day, doctor?

WISE [*inspecting his cigar*]. A hundred,—put me down for a hundred . . . Better say fifty, perhaps: you don't make reductions, I know . . . Confoundedly hot in here.

GILLESPIE. Yes. It'll be insufferable to-night [*calling*]. Gilda!

WISE. There'll be an electric storm, I should say.

GILLESPIE. No. You're wrong. Not for a week yet. Gilda! What are you up to? Eyes front and quick march with those drinks.

GILDA [*from the other room*]. I'm just coming, dad.

GILLESPIE. Telling her fortune probably. She's a bit of a gipsy,—my lass. There she'll sit with the cards in front of her—[*Enter* GILDA, *carrying two tankards of wine. She sets them down on the table.*]Eh, lassie? That's better.

GILDA. Good evening doctor.

WISE. 'Health!—Your's Gillespie. I've enough cases already.

GILDA [*sitting on the table*]. You horrid old ghoul! . . . Oh, look! What a lovely beetle!

WISE. Harmless.

GILDA. Of course! 'Harmless!' I do believe you

only care for disease. Look at his armour, the dear little chap! He's a live emerald.

WISE. You believe in your cards?

GILDA. Oh, you've told him, dad! I knew he'd laugh. But they're not often wrong, are they, dad?

GILLESPIE. Oh, you mustn't ask *me*.

GILDA. But you said last night—

GILLESPIE. I didn't say anything! Now, doctor—

GILDA [*to* WISE]. You don't believe in them, do you? And you've never tried them, have you? Well, suppose you died and bequeathed me all your medicines. They wouldn't be worth very much without *you*—

WISE. No, no, my dear,—that's a fact.

GILDA. Well, there you are! It's just like that with the cards. You *must* have sight,—second sight.

GILLESPIE. And she really believes in that. But then you believe in the soul, don't you. The immortal soul, eh?

GILDA. I should think I do. Everyone who's really alive believes in the soul.

WISE. H'm! Well, next time you try the cards you get me a buxom widow with mountains of money and no opinions.

GILDA. The Queen of Diamonds! You shall marry the Queen of Diamonds!

GILLESPIE. And why not the Queen of Hearts?

GILDA. Who—? Oh, I'm far too young for the

match. And the Queen of Spades would be wasted, for the doctor hates gardening; and the Queen of Clubs would be much too sociable for an old grey bear.

WISE. We're all fools. You waste your time with the cards and I waste mine with your health. What does it matter whether anyone's ill or well? No one's of any importance. And as for your father—he wastes time for the lot of us with this hare-brained project! A thousand miles of railway through an unexplored jungle that's packed with malaria germs and peopled with hungry Indians all waiting to munch you up. And this for a pint-pot of metal from the mines of Bolivia!

GILDA. A good deal more than a pint-pot!

GILLESPIE. I should think so, indeed! I've hunted a chance like this for twenty-five years. If I carry it through, it will leave me one of the richest men in the States. I've seen to that. I didn't come here for a two per cent. commission. I've made my terms. I'm fighting the forest. I'm fighting an untamed continent, the growth of ten thousand years, the combined power of the earth, the river and the sun; and I mean to subdue them.

GILDA. It's a war between Nature and man. And man means to win. It's a new romance!

WISE. Romance!

GILDA. And you don't believe in that, either? Oh, well . . .

WISE. I believe in malaria.

GILDA. And dad believes in himself!—Will you have any more?

GILLESPIE. Doctor,—another tankard?

WISE. You want to see me romantic. Take it along!

GILDA. 'Please'!

GILLESPIE. Now, lassie!

WISE. Take it along!

GILDA. All right. But what do you say?

WISE [*laughing*]. Oh, well then—'please'!

GILDA. Good boy!

[*Goes out right,*

GILLESPIE. Now, doctor, I want you to tell me—

WISE. You're a fool, Gillespie.

GILLESPIE. How's that?

WISE. Your girl's a beauty,—first-water.

GILLESPIE. H'm. Yes.

WISE. Takes after her mother, no doubt. Shouldn't be here.

GILLESPIE. Oh, the girl's all right.

WISE. Send her away! I've told you a dozen times that women can't stand this climate. Buried six myself.

GILLESPIE. But she won't go, I tell you. And, anyway, how can I send her? Where can I send her? She's entirely dependent on me.

WISE. But she's not your daughter, you say?

GILLESPIE. The next thing, though: my brother's.

WISE. Bar sinister, eh? Send her to him.

GILLESPIE. He's dead,—and her mother, too. She was a fine Brazilian lass, a thoroughbred.

WISE. Well, send the girl after the ship.

GILLESPIE. The *Abraham Lincoln?*

WISE. I was there when the skipper set off. He's putting in for the night at San Juan. Cargo of beads. Ten miles off, Gillespie. Send your girl by the railway track. Damn it, I'll escort her myself. She'd get there a couple of hours before they start.

GILLESPIE. She's not going, doctor. She's fond of me, somehow. Besides—

WISE. Fond of you, fond of you! I tell you I'm afraid for her. These chaps are a rough lot—

GILLESPIE. They won't tackle me!

WISE. Look here: if the fever doesn't get hold of her, if she's not kidnapped by the Indians, that girl will make trouble among your men. One girl, eighty men. Human nature. They're tired of blacks. Besides, what of the girl herself? She's one of those passion-flowers—

GILLESPIE. Did you come here to preach at me? I can mind my own business.

WISE. But she'll come to harm, she'll come to harm. Poor child!

GILLESPIE. Do you want those cigars at once?

WISE. Let the fool persist in his folly. The trouble is that he never grows wise.

GILLESPIE. You've already told me that I'm a fool,

but in three years time you'll change your opinion.

WISE. Well, I never said you're a knave. Some do.

GILLESPIE [*threateningly*]. Oh, do they? Damn them! Tell me their names! Jim Mortlake's death, I suppose.

WISE. The cap fits.

GILLESPIE. Confound your impudence! What are they saying?

[*Enter* RUDOLF GOTTMANN *from door, back. He is what would be called a smart man: shrewd and unscrupulous.*

GOTTMANN. Hullo, boss! Jim Mortlake—Oh, are *you* here, doctor?

GILLESPIE. Sit down, Gottmann. What do they say, the blackguards?

WISE. You'll know soon enough.

GILLESPIE. Out with it, doctor! I've no time to waste, and it's not my way to let thistles grow. I deal with all asses at once.

WISE. They say you let him starve.

GILLESPIE. I?

WISE. You and your friend [*indicating* GOTTMANN]. They call it cold murder. Seem to like the phrase. If you'd shot the fool they wouldn't have minded much. But you let him starve—that's what they say.

GILLESPIE. You believe it—yourself?

WISE. Oh, I don't believe anything. Used to believe in God. There's nothing too bad for human

nature, but no! I don't think you'd do that,—no. You're too clever.

GILLESPIE. And this cock-and-bull story,—do all the men hold to it?

WISE. No. Just a few. Young Arthur Wyatt's the ring-leader.

GILLESPIE. Young meddler! I'll see him to-morrow. I'll soon put him straight. Are you going?

WISE. Your friend here's waiting for audience. Sealed papers—heavy state secrets—hand-kissing . . . Yes, you are, Gottmann,—you're fidgetting. But I've warned you now, and I'm off.

GILLESPIE. Thanks, thanks.

WISE [*going to the door*]. Rubber of whist. High stakes. Idiots! Why, it's better to tell a fortune by cards than to lose one!

GILLESPIE. Yes, yes, much better. [*To* GOTTMANN] Important?

WISE [*at the door*]. She can get to the ship in time, Gillespie. Only ten miles. Don't sail till six in the morning.—So long! [*He goes out at the back.* GOTTMANN *darts forward.*

GOTTMANN. Boss, you're in for it now. Wyatt's coming. Arthur Wyatt. He's on his way.

GILLESPIE. All the better. Do you think I'm afraid?

GOTTMANN. You? Not likely. But look here, boss: what are you going to say? We must have the same yarn. He's a tricky customer—Wyatt. He's got brains.

GILLESPIE. But he's got no case.

GOTTMANN. Are you sure? If he makes the Directors believe his yarn, you'll shoot the rapids prestissimo.

GILLESPIE. Have *you* told him anything? Eh, man? Have you queered my pitch?

GOTTMANN. I've not said a word. We're paddling the same canoe,—I know that, boss.

GILLESPIE. And don't you forget it. You can't have two screws in one hole. Mortlake was in my way *You're* all right, if you stick to me.

GOTTMANN. I say, boss,—give us a drink. We shall look more child-like then.

GILLESPIE [*calling*]. Gilda! Give me a pair!

GOTTMANN. Twins, Miss!

[ARTHUR WYATT *pushes open the door at the back, and stands in the doorway a moment*]. Triplets,—hi! Triplets!

GILLESPIE. Hold you lewd tongue!—'Evening Wyatt. Sit down.

GOTTMANN [*producing a mandolin*]. A cosy family circle—with a little music, you know.

[*He strums on his mandolin softly.*

GILLESPIE. You want to see me?

WYATT. I want to see the last of you.

GOTTMANN. Good Lord! We've tripped over an alligator. Look at his teeth!

WYATT. Chuck it, Gottmann!—Now then, Gillespie! I've come on a serious matter, and you know quite well what it is.

GILLESPIE. Oh! Do I? Some of your beetles and butterflies been stolen? Or are they down with the fever?

WYATT. We don't stand on ceremony there. That's well enough in a civilized town, but out here we deal in straight words.

GILLESPIE. Well, come to your point, lad. Anything wrong?

WYATT. Wrong? I should think so! Why is Jim Mortlake dead?

GILLESPIE. Oh, that's your worry, is it? A most unfortunate affair.

WYATT. Unfortunate?

GILLESPIE. Well, *I* think so: very unfortunate.

WYATT. That's hardly the word I should use.

GILLESPIE. But you've come about that, you say—

WYATT. I call it an infamous affair,—infamous!

GILLESPIE. Now, Wyatt, listen—

WYATT. Gillespie—

[GILDA *enters, carrying three tankards.*

GILDA. Good evening, Mr Wyatt.

WYATT. Good evening.

GILDA. How are the butterflies?—What's wrong? —Dad!

GILLESPIE [*to* WYATT]. You needn't consider my girl. I've a clear conscience, thank God, and I know how to deal with you boys. Have a drink.

[*He pushes the tankard towards* WYATT, *who does not touch it throughout the scene.*

WYATT. It's like this, Gillespie: Jim was the best friend I've had. That means a great deal. He was also the best engineer that you've ever had on this job . . .

GILLESPIE. He was pretty fair, I admit: a very good man.

WYATT. Two weeks ago you sent him forty miles up the jungle with a couple of doubtful negroes.

GILLESPIE. I did. Somebody had to go. Get on.

WYATT. He set off with one day's food. The store-ship was late and you said the rations were running low.

GILLESPIE. They were. That's the point. The *Abraham Lincoln* was late. Why, she only came in to-day.

WYATT. He set off with one day's food because you had promised to follow him up with supplies.

GILLESPIE. If I could.

WYATT. Do you mean to say that he volunteered for the job on an understanding of that kind? If you could, indeed! Talk sense!

GILLESPIE. We expected the ship every day. Why, what were his last words? 'Don't worry, boss'—that's what he said—'there's plenty of fat on my two niggers!'

WYATT. He wasn't a fool.

GOTTMANN. Of course, if you've made up your mind—

WYATT. You promised to send him supplies. You never sent them, at all, after the first two days, —after you'd got him forty miles in the jungle. He starved, Gillespie,—starved! Starved out there in a trackless forest, marking the route for your accursed railway. Why did he starve? Because he trusted in you, because you failed him, because you intended him to starve!

GILDA. It's a lie.

WYATT. No, Senorita—the truth.

GILDA. If I were a man I should kick you out, I should! Oh dad, dad! Are you going to let him say whatever he pleases?

GILLESPIE. He's only a boy. And he can't hurt *me*. —Get on.

WYATT. Isn't that enough?

GILDA. Too much!

GILLESPIE. You've had your say, Wyatt, and now you can listen to me. But, first of all, I imagine you're going to do something. You don't mean to leave it at words and fine gestures, eh? What's your idea?

WYATT. This: I resign my post. Here are the papers.

GILLESPIE. All right. And what then?

WYATT. I mean to report at the Base.

GILLESPIE. A very good plan. But what will you say? You assert that Mortlake was one of my ablest men.

WYATT. The Directors know that.

GILLESPIE. Then why should I be so anxious to lose him? Have you thought of that?

WYATT. Certainly; and the answer's easy enough. He spoke to you pretty straight about your treatment of the niggers. Threatened to rouse them up. You didn't forget that, I know. And what's more Jim was too clever. You were jealous. You want a big name, Gillespie. You want men to talk of you as the man who mastered the Amazon forest with a bunch of niggers and escaped convicts. You're a strong man and you'll get a big name all right. You're canny too. Look here! You're not contented to be the first man on the works. You're the General Provider as well. We depend on you for our smokes, our drinks, every bit of our food except what we get with a lucky shot. I admire you, Gillespie,—I do, indeed—but, if I can, I'll run you over your line and send you pitching, heel over head, to the river! You let Jim die, and you might have saved him. You're a murderer!

GILDA [*rushing at him*]. Mr Wyatt, you shan't! You shan't! [*She strikes at him, but he parries the stroke.* GOTTMANN *and* GILLESPIE *restrain her.*

GOTTMANN. Hi, there!

GILLESPIE. Hold on, child! I can look to myself.

WYATT. It's nothing. This kind of treatment runs

in the family. Now that Jim's dead, perhaps you'll consider it wise to dispose of *me*.

GILLESPIE. Come, come, boy.

WYATT. But you dare not! You know that you're feared, not loved—don't smile at the word, Gillespie. It's the biggest power you could wield. The men are uneasy about Jim's death. Give them another surprise-packet, and they'll bring you their thanks in lead. And the niggers, too. They'll be glad enough to lynch you if they see you standing alone. And what's more, you know very well that the Indians here are my friends, for you've often jeered at my taste. Well, the Indians look on revenge as the best game going, and they're pretty skilled with it, too!

GILDA. I won't stand quiet any more—

GILLESPIE. No, no, lassie! Leave him to me.

GILDA. I won't. I mean to speak out. Mr Wyatt, you're insulting my guardian. You're insulting the one man big enough to control this work. It's work for a man, for a much better man than you,—an engineer, not a naturalist. You're only a bit of fancy-work,—isn't he, dad? You're not helping on with the railway the least little bit, and yet you come, you come here—

WYATT. Because my friend's dead.

GILDA. I'll fight you!

GOTTMANN. An Amazon on the Amazon!

GILLESPIE. Keep your temper, lassie. Now, Wyatt,

you're going up to the Base. When you get to Pará—if ever you get there at all—you've a very poor case to present. I deny your charges. I sent the supplies—

GILDA. There you are!

WYATT. By whom?

GILLESPIE. By Gottmann here. He lost his way in the jungle.

GOTTMANN. That's right.

GILLESPIE. We've not many sign-posts there, you know.

WYATT. He lost his way in the jungle? Well, I happen to know where he was.

GOTTMANN. Oh indeed! How's that?

WYATT. A friend of mine tracked you.

GLILESPIE. One of your Indian friends, I suppose. But Gilda's right. I stand very well with the Directors, and they know what I'm worth. If they want the wealth of Bolivia they must leave me on top of this job. What are you, my friend? A clever young fellow, but of no very marked importance. Will they take *my* word or the word of a mangey Indian? Suppose you could prove your statements—

GILDA. And you can't, you can't!

WYATT. If I could—there's an end of your job! The Directors are a pack of unscrupulous rogues but they're just as canny as you are. They won't leave you here if they know that your men believe you're a murderer.

GILLESPIE. Go along. Go along to the Base. Why you haven't an ounce of evidence.

WYATT. Not yet, perhaps.

GILLESPIE. Not yet?

WYATT. I shall go with a ton. It'll lay you flat, Gillespie!

GILLESPIE. And when will you get it?

WYATT. To-night.

GILDA. I don't believe you. Send him away, dad! Why do you listen?

GILLESPIE. Look here, Wyatt: I didn't desire a quarrel. I want our work to go through without a hitch. Sit down, and be reasonable. [*Looking at the tankard in front of* WYATT.] Why, you haven't touched it.

GILDA. Don't, dad! Let him go. He'll think we're frightened.

WYATT. That's all right, Senorita. I don't mean to stay. [*To* GILLESPIE.] I've warned you now of my purpose. Get out of the trees if you can!

[*He moves towards the door, back.*

GILLESPIE. Stop! Stop! I say!

WYATT. Not till I come to the Base.

GILLESPIE. You're mad, boy. You've not heard my side.

WYATT. I know it too well.

GILLESPIE. But you're not to leave. Stay there!

WYATT. No, thanks, Gillespie. I'm a free man now.

GILLESPIE. When are you leaving?

WYATT. At dawn.

GILLESPIE. But you can't get away. How are you going?

WYATT. I shall go by the—You would like to know that, I'm sure, Gillespie. I'm not such a bat as to tell you.

GILLESPIE. Very good. You needn't. There are two ways only,—the railway and the river.

WYATT. Yes, there are two,—two! [*Bowing*] Senorita . . . [*To* GILLESPIE.] In a month!

[*Exit, back.* GILDA *rushes to the door.*

GOTTMANN. Why, he's left his liquor.

GILLESPIE [*looks up quickly*]. Gilda! Come back.

GILDA [*from the door*]. I'll make him apologize!

GILLESPIE. Come back, I say, or you'll swamp the boat.—And you're letting in the mosquitoes.

[GILDA *shuts the door and returns to the table, a good deal perturbed.*

GILLESPIE. Damn!

GOTTMANN. I told you the man was a tartar.

GILDA. But what's the matter? He can't prove a word of it. He can't prove what never occurred. And your patience!

GILLESPIE. Run along, lass. Leave us alone.

GILDA. Not I, dad. I shall see it through.

GILLESPIE. Go in!

GILDA. Dad! No!

GILLESPIE. Go in, I tell you. [GILDA *does not budge.*

GOTTMANN. We shall have to hinder him somehow, boss.

GILLESPIE. The ship! He means to get to the ship before they start.

GILDA. She's gone.

GILLESPIE. Not yet. The skipper put in at San Juan for the night.

GOTTMANN. Yes, I heard that,—confound it!

GILDA. But if the man has no evidence—

GOTTMANN. What the deuce did he mean—'I shall have it to-night'?

GILLESPIE. God knows. But it wasn't bluff.

GILDA. You both seem worried. Let him do his worst. We're safe.

GOTTMANN. I'm not so sure of that, now.

GILLESPIE. Two ways,—the river and the railway. He might walk straight down the line—*my* line. That would be safer. But he might canoe up the river. That would save time.

GOTTMANN. He's a poor hand with a paddle.

GILLESPIE. I wish to God I were sure what he means to do.

GOTTMANN. The report would be devilish troublesome. It'd wind us up.

GILLESPIE. What? Fool!

GILDA. How, Gottmann? What do you mean?

GOTTMANN. Well, I thought—

GILLESPIE. Wind us up! We're not guilty, man!

GOTTMANN. No, no; I see . . .

GILLESPIE. Do you think we are?

GOTTMANN. No, no, boss: of course not.

GILLESPIE. Gilda, you'd much better leave us . . .

GILDA. You're afraid that he might make trouble, but if we're innocent . . .

GILLESPIE. Make trouble—that's it. He might. We must hold him back till the ship sails. Let him cool off, you know—

GOTTMANN. *You* watch the rail, boss, and I'll watch the river!

GILDA. Will that stop him?

GOTTMANN. No, but a bullet would!

GILLESPIE. Fool!

GILDA. You want my father to kill him?

GILLESPIE. It's no good, Gottmann. He starts at dawn. That's when we start our work. I've got to see Hooker then. Suppose I were absent, and the news came in that Wyatt was shot,—would the men lie down under that? And of course you're right, girl, I'm not a butcher.

GOTTMANN. I say, Miss: would you mind clearing? The boss and I can deal better alone. No offence.

GILDA. I can see how it is. My dad's the best man in the world, and we've got a chance now to let the world know it from the North Pole to the South. If that crazy Wyatt upsets the work, who knows what'll happen? Suppose the Directors believe him? My dad's disgraced and a beggar. No, Gottmann, I don't want to leave him now. Perhaps I can help. Why, couldn't I watch the river?

GOTTMANN. It's no use watching him *go*.

GILLESPIE. Gilda!

GILDA. Yes. What?

GILLESPIE. Gottmann,—you stand or fall with me You were in charge of the food, and the men believe that you took it up to Jim Mortlake. So you hold your tongue, and stick fast to me

GOTTMANN. You're the butter on my slice: I know that.

GILDA [*to* GILLESPIE]. What do you mean?

GILLESPIE. The doctor says you're a beauty, lass, and that's what you are. There's not such a girl in Brazil. You could stand with the best in any port on the map.

GOTTMANN. I say, though,—that's an idea!

GILDA. What is?

GILLESPIE. I've done some little for you, lassie: haven't I? When your father died, there was nothing for you but a convent or the streets. And when I first took you to 'Frisco, it wasn't all music to find bread and butter for two.

GILDA. Of course, you've done everything.

GILLESPIE. There, there, lass! You see, I've a soft place for you, though I'm not much given to show. Well, you see how we're stuck. I'd sell my soul to achieve this job. Five years ago those Englishmen failed. I don't mean to follow them. But I can't spare time to fight rascals. You can see that, can't you, lass?

GILDA. But we're going to win!

GOTTMANN. That's it, Senorita. You've struck it.

GILLESPIE. Win? Yes, if only you—

GILDA. If I—what?

GILLESPIE. No, I don't think I'll ask you,—no.

GILDA. What? What? You mean I can help you? How? Tell me how, Dad! I believe I could kill him for you. But it's not that, is it?

GILLESPIE. No, no. Kill him? You?

GILDA. Then what is it? I'll do it,—I swear I will. I won't stick at anything, dad.

GILLESPIE. You won't? You mean that?

GOTTMANN. You're all right, boss. She'll do it.

GILLESPIE. We're not in a city lass. We've no churches here,—not a chapel—and you know that we're a thousand miles from a decent town. You can't be over-particular in a hole like this. There'd be no one to babble about it, when we're great folk.

GILDA. Do you mean . . . ?

GILLESPIE. Well, morality's different here, you see. The tropic heat and the wild growth—

GILDA. Dad, you mean that?

GILLESPIE. You can save me, lassie. You can bring us to port. You can save me. lassie. Won't you do something for me? And its really not much, after all. That's to say—I mean, it depends how you look on it. Gilda! You go to Wyatt at once!

GILDA. I—to that man?

GILLESPIE. You struck him. Ask for his pardon. That'll give you a cause for coming.

GOTTMANN. You can twist him all right. You go for it. *I* shan't tell.

GILDA. But to him? I hardly know him. We've only seen each other two or three times. And after the things he said . . . ! And suppose I go,—what is it you want me to say?

GOTTMANN. Oh, there's not much to say with a face like yours!

GILLESPIE. Stop him from going. If you can't stop him—

GILDA. Yes,—if I couldn't . . . ?

GILLESPIE. Find out which way he is going,—by river or rail.

GILDA. But the man hates me,—he must.

GILLESPIE. He's a man.

GOTTMANN. You can do it all right. Trust me!

GILLESPIE. But will you? I don't wish to force you. I can never force you to anything, I'm aware of that: you're too independent. But I've never asked you for anything yet.

GILDA. And you want me to go there alone?

GILLESPIE. Well, you must go alone.

GILDA. To-night?

GILLESPIE. He starts at dawn.

GILDA. But if he won't tell me his plan?

GOTTMANN. He will,—if you go far enough.

GILDA [*to* GILLESPIE]. Good God! I say, dad,—is that what you mean?

GILLESPIE. As far as you must. I'm sorry.

GILDA. I can't go and woo him,—him! It's loathsome!

GILLESPIE. You won't go,—I knew it. [*A brief pause.*

GILDA. I will go—at once.

GILLESPIE. Thank God! Find out from him, Gilda, —the river or the railway. We simply must know. If we knew, we could stop him. It all depends on that. If we risk either one or the other, we might hit on just the wrong course.

GILDA [*at the door, back*]. You shall know what you want to know, or I'll never come back.—It's very strange. No! That's all silliness. Goodnight, dad. Rest easy! [*She goes out.*

GOTTMANN. She'll hook our fish for us. Don't you fear! She's a wonder, that girl. My word! I could wish I were Wyatt. Damned lucky, the dirty devil!

GILLESPIE. If he really gets evidence, Gottmann—

GOTTMANN. It won't matter now.

GILLESPIE. Whatever he does, you must finish him off with a bullet. I should think he'll go by the rail. If he keeps to the line, you see—

GOTTMANN. But the river's the quicker way. Look here,—the river runs so . . .

GILLESPIE. To San Juan, yes: but the railway . . .

[*They both bend over the table, absorbed in their speculations.*

CURTAIN

Act II

SCENE: *In the forest, towards midnight. The abundant trees and grasses are distinct in the lustre of the moon and stars. At the back, left, is* WYATT'S *wooden shanty which is raised upon blocks about a foot from the ground. The windows and the door, which faces the auditorium, are made of copper network. A coat hangs on a nail by the door. In the foreground, left, is a rough table on which is a lighted lantern, a pack of cards, and a small case of entomological specimens. Other cases litter the adjacent ground. At the table sits* WYATT, *uncoated. He is sorting a few specimens into a small case fitted with straps.*

WYATT. Yes,—that one certainly. Not you, nor you, nor you,—you're common enough. You, I'll take,—splendid creature! I suppose that's all I can manage.

[*Enter from the door of the shanty* GARCIA SORIANO, *a large and shaggy Brazilian. He carries a gun. His hair grows low on his brow.*

SORIANO. How, Arthur,—you are doing what?

WYATT [*rising*]. Garcia,—my dear chap! Did he give it to you? Where is it?

SORIANO [*holding out a crumpled piece of blue paper*]. Here!

WYATT [*taking it*]. What does it say? Have you read it?

SORIANO. I can't read the English. What does he say?

WYATT [*going over to the lantern*]. We'll see—it's hard to make out.

SORIANO. The Indian carries it for a week. He fear to bring it.

WYATT [*reading*]. 'I seem to be left'—Mortlake's writing, I'll swear to that—'left here.'

SORIANO. Good evidence,—good?

WYATT. It's very shakily written. 'No food for three days. I'd start back now, but I can't. Fever,—the yellow brand. The angels will get me right enough. Good-bye, old man. J.M.' Poor chap! But this will avenge him,—this will finish Gillespie!

SORIANO. Good, good!

WYATT. Garcia, did the Indian say how he got this?

SORIANO. He sees Jim lying alone. Jim talks your name, and the Indian knows it. Then Jim writes that, and the Indian brings her along.

WYATT. The niggers tried to return, I suppose, and were lost.

SORIANO [*smiling*]. Perhaps the Indians eat them up, eh? Two fat boys.

WYATT. Oh, they eat men for their souls, Garcia. They think that if they eat a strong man they will grow strong. Very odd taste, when you come to think of it,—the soul as a tit-bit. They'll never eat Gillespie, that's clear. Thank God, though, we can smash him now.

SORIANO [*pointing to the trays*]. Arthur, you do not mean to transport these?

WYATT. Not all of them, no: but I'm going to take a few.

SORIANO. Yes? But the box—how it weighs!

WYATT. I can't leave them all. I'm too fond of them. And I daresay, when I'm gone Gillespie will come here and make off with the whole collection. It's worth selling, you see. But he shan't have these anyway.

SORIANO [*contemptuously*]. Gillespie! Have I a gun?

WYATT. Keep your shot, Garcia! You'll want it for shooting ducks. You won't get much from the store when they know you're my friend. [*rising.*] Well, I think its all ready now. I'll take these in.

[*He takes up all the cases with the exception of the one which is on the table.*

SORIANO. Your revolver—don't forget him!

WYATT [*going to the shanty*]. Oh, he's wild for a change of air, I can tell you! [*He goes indoors.*

[SORIANO *looks about him in the forest, as a man who is accustomed to ambushes: then walks to the table and tries to decipher the tattered missive.*

SORIANO. 'The angeles will get me . . .' Los angeles me llevaran . . .

WYATT [*returning*]. Garcia, you're first rate!

SORIANO. I? No; very bad man.

WYATT. Well, see that the Indians don't catch *you!* They'd relish *your* soul.

SORIANO [*smiling*]. My soul? He is rather naughty.

WYATT. He'll manage to squeeze into heaven. I'd bet a hundred dollars on that,—if I had them. And now,—look here,—will you keep watch for an hour or two? Gillespie's a pertinacious devil.

SORIANO [*fingering the cards*]. We do not have our play to-night?

WYATT. I'm dog-tired. My tongue's hanging out; and I want to catch a breath of sleep before I set off. That's to say, if I can,—it's so confoundedly hot! How's the time? Half past eleven. I shall have to leave in a couple of hours.

SORIANO. Better you take my canoe, much better.

WYATT. Thanks, thanks, but I've thought it all out. They'll *expect* me to go by the river.

SORIANO. It is less fatigue,—it is quicker.

WYATT. That's why they'll count on it.

SORIANO. Ah! Possible, possible.

WYATT. Not the river; the railway, Garcia. I shall walk down the railway-line. They'll never expect me there. If I walk at a fair speed I ought to get to San Juan in two hours and a half; and the ship sails at five in the morning. Plenty of time. Thanks, and thanks again! You're a good friend.

GILDA [*outside in the forest*]. Mr Wyatt!

SORIANO. A woman.

GILDA [*still outside*]. Mr Wyatt, I want to see you.

WYATT. Gilda Gillespie! What on earth can the girl want here?

SORIANO [*preparing his gun*]. The girl of Gillespie, you say?

WYATT. Garcia, don't shoot a girl! There are probably men close by. Go round to the back, and hunt them.

SORIANO [*moving off*]. Hunt them! [*gleefully*] Ye-es! [HE *goes out through the shanty.*

GILDA [*entering, right*]. I have found you then, Mr Wyatt.

WYATT. Look here, Senorita,—I loathe intrigues. Why have you come?

GILDA. You mean that I am shameless . . .

WYATT. No, I mean that after what happened this evening it's clear that you haven't come as a friend. In fact, do you know what I'd do if you were a man?

GILDA. Perhaps you would shoot me . . . ?

WYATT. "I should kick you out, I should!"

GILDA [*hotly*]. If I were a man I should make you pay for insulting my father!

WYATT. You did your best. I was lucky to avoid a black eye.

GILDA. Yes, but I failed, and I felt half mad when they stopped me. Now I'm sorry. I've come to ask for your pardon,—if you think that's necessary. I mean, I ask you to forgive me.

WYATT. That's not very like you, is it?

GILDA. I have come here to ask your pardon before you go.

WYATT. And what was your other message?

GILDA. What other?

WYATT. Your father's.

GILDA. He doesn't know that I'm here. But why do you keep on looking about you?

WYATT. I'm expecting someone,—not exactly a friend.

GILDA. Who is it?

WYATT. Gillespie, of course.

GILDA. Then you don't believe me?

WYATT. Why should I? The Gillespie's are not a trustworthy family. They leave men to starve.

GILDA [*fiercely*]. You still declare—? [*Controlling herself.*] Whatever you think of me, I am only half a Gillespie. The other half—

WYATT. The other half *can* be trusted. Is that what you mean?

GILDA. Of course not.

WYATT. Well, anyway, I have to reckon with both.

GILDA. My father's not here, Mr Wyatt. He never went out of the Store, and so far as I know he's there now with—with Gottmann.

WYATT. You remember my friend Soriano?

GILDA. The Wild Man of Borneo? Yes.

WYATT. If you're lying, if Gillespie is anywhere handy, you'd better warn him to go. Soriano is quite a crack shot.

GILDA. I tell you there's nobody here but me.

WYATT [*looking at her sharply*]. You *may* be telling the truth.

GILDA. If you doubt everything, it means that you've a bad conscience. No wonder!—But I hate to be suspected.

WYATT. I'm sorry, but how can I help distrusting you? Your father and I have become like a couple of Indians who are creeping along in the grass, and each afraid to get up lest the other should throw a javelin and stick him through. I don't know what your particular mission may be, but I do know that you're a decoy . . .

GILDA. Mr Wyatt—

WYATT. Believe you! If you really expect *that* now, it means that you count me a fool,—my God, what a fool! You come here alone at midnight, and merely ask my pardon for a freak of passion (which, to tell the truth, I rather admired),—you, a girl who belongs to the man I loathe.

GILDA. Belongs? I belong to myself!

WYATT. Come now: what is your aim? Do you hope to dissuade me from going?

GILDA. Yes, I do.

WYATT. Well, you won't succeed. He sends you because of your looks—a dainty idea! Senorita, you're much too good for this.

GILDA. You threaten to break up the whole scheme of the railway. Of course I don't believe that you can. I don't believe that you've any evidence

at all to show that my guardian was responsible for your friend's death. You can't have any. It's ridiculous. But they think you can do some harm.

WYATT. They do? Splendid!

GILDA. You're being misled by a silly rumour. Mr Wyatt, it's all a mistake, a misunderstanding. You don't think *I'm* guilty, do you? Well, I'll swear that my guardian is no more guilty than I am!

WYATT. No doubt you believe that, Senorita; but we're not of one mind. And now it's my turn to ask pardon of you. I have still a few preparations to make for my journey.

[WYATT *moves to the table and busies himself with the case of specimens.* GILDA *stands irresolute and uncomfortable.*

GILDA. Dad always liked you. And so did I.

WYATT. We always—thought well of you.

GILDA. 'We?' Who do you mean?

WYATT. Mortlake and I. Did you never guess that Mortlake was in love with you?

GILDA [*startled*]. He? How terrible! No . . .

WYATT. Well, he was. And now perhaps you will understand why I've talked with you here for so long.

GILDA. I can't stay if you wish me to go, but I want to. May I sit down,—just for a moment?

WYATT. Surely it's time you were back?

GILDA [*touching a chair*]. May I?

WYATT. Do as you like,—the jungle is not my property.

GILDA. Poor boy! He never showed anything.

WYATT [*half to himself*]. No. Men don't—until they're sure. And a good thing too. We talked about you a lot.

GILDA [*impulsively, as* WYATT *reveals a tray of specimens*]. There are your butterflies! I haven't seen them for months and months! Do let me look at those,—oh, I suppose I mayn't.

WYATT. These are not all. I have several hundreds in there. [HE *nods in the direction of the shanty.*

GILDA. And some of those with the big blue brilliant wings?

WYATT. Morphos? Here are the best.

GILDA. They're the most beautiful that I've ever seen. In fact, I never imagined that anything alive was so lovely till I found one the other day. It was wavering through the green boughs.

WYATT [*with a specialist's interest*]. Where was that?

GILDA. Quite near that place—don't you remember?—where you caught the great gold one when we all went out for my birthday treat. You gave it to me as a present. This time I was alone. And the little thing settled close to my knee.

WYATT. They make me proud of the earth. I got this one in about the same part—near the line.

GILDA. May I look?

WYATT. Of course. That one.

GILDA. The starlight gives it a paler tint, much paler. What a pity they never fly in the starlight! Wouldn't they look superb? I wonder if they know how lovely they are . . . I think they must know, surely.

WYATT. Well. That depends.

GILDA. Depends? On what?

WYATT. On whether you believe there's a God. If God made them, their splendour was His idea.

GILDA. But if He didn't, it must have been their own. Of course. Then I don't believe there's a God. I believe they wanted to be that colour and to have that faint flash on their wings. I wish I were one of them!

WYATT. They do it to win their mates.

GILDA [*delighted*]. Do you mean that? For love?

WYATT. That's the new theory,—Darwin's.

GILDA. Darwin,—an English poet?

WYATT. No, but a very great man all the same.

GILDA. Perhaps there is a God,—but He's a Poet. That's what people in towns forget. [WYATT *begins to shut up the case.*] Why do you put them away?

WYATT [*recollecting the situation*]. Well, it's time I did. If we go on chattering like this I shall probably tumble into your trap. I must get to Pará to-night.

GILDA. You've no right to ruin a great enterprise because of a mere fanatical fancy. You don't

seem to realise what a wonderful work it is. Won't you let me explain—

WYATT. You're a very queer girl. Suppose your father could know that you're here alone with a man, with a man who's no saint, and with me, me, of all men!

GILDA. I told you a lie. He does know.

WYATT. Ah! I'm sorry.

GILDA. He sent me to ask your pardon. Now can you trust me.

WYATT. No, no, Senorita. I'm not such a fool as all that! You want to learn something, don't you? What is it?

GILDA. I? Nothing whatever, nothing! I'll go if you wish . . .

WYATT. I would gladly escort you home, but Gillespie is probably sitting up late to-night, and there's a death between us, you know.

GILDA. You stick to that wretched idea! You *can't* believe that he starved poor Mortlake on purpose.

WYATT. I'd better not say what I think of Gillespie. I should only make you angry, and as for me I should probable go to Pará with that black eye after all!

GILDA. Don't tease me. I'm not a child. I'm a woman.

WYATT. Yes. . . Go home now, Senorita. You don't understand my feelings. I'd rather we parted like friends.

GILDA. And you don't understand my dad. He may be stern, but he's good.

WYATT. Good? He? Oh, well!—And now, Senorita . . .

GILDA. You tell me to go?

WYATT. If your visit was fruitless I'm sorry, but since I don't know what you wish to find out I can hardly inform you, can I?

GILDA. Dad says you're starting at dawn.

WYATT. I shouldn't have told him that.

GILDA. Then you ought to be ready to go.

WYATT. I am. I can start at once if I wish.

GILDA. What! In those little shoes? You've packed your boots by mistake, I suppose!

WYATT. My boots?

GILDA. You will have to walk a good ten miles to San Juan.

WYATT. And if I don't mean to walk?

GILDA. Oh, you mean to go by canoe! But the current is dead against you.

WYATT. You're right. I should have to work up stream if I went by water.

GILDA. Do you think I want to find out how you'll go?

WYATT. I'm certain you do.

GILDA. You mean you're afraid,—afraid for your life when you journey out to San Juan?

WYATT. Your father wants to complete his job. I want to complete my own: and I shall.

GILDA. I wonder if you will ever get to Pará . . .

WYATT. Not if your father can stop me.

GILDA. Would you like to know if you will? I could tell you.

WYATT. That's very kind of you. How?

GILDA [*moving quickly to the table*]. The cards! Let me put them in order [*arranging the cards on the table*]. I often read Fate by the cards. My own fate's not very happy . . . You deal them all out —like this—in rows, and the one that last falls *here* will answer the question. Old Dr Wise was bantering me this very evening because I have faith in them. What a funny old cynic he is! But d'you know that he sat up three nights with that nigger who died last week? Somehow I can't help loving him, whatever he says about— [GILDA *stops abruptly, and stands up, horror-stricken.*

WYATT. Well, why do you stop? Is it something dreadful?

GILDA [*in a low voice*]. Yes. Very dreadful . . .

WYATT. But I'm not afraid of the cards, you know. Tell me the frightful truth.

GILDA. I do believe in them.

WYATT. I see. You mean I escape,—get to Pará. From your point of view, I suppose that *is* very dreadful.

GILDA. Don't, don't! I like you—somehow.

WYATT. Do you? Really? . . . Nonsense,—of

course you don't. But the Ace of Spades—what does that prophecy?

GILDA. Death.

WYATT. By starving?

GILDA. Oh,—please, please!—You will die . . . suddenly . . .to-night!

WYATT. But why don't you wish it?

GILDA. I can't wish it, I can't.

WYATT. How marvellously you women can act!

GILDA. To-night! Don't go, don't go,—not to-night!

WYATT. Damn! I knew it was all deceit, but I won't be delayed by a trick.

GILDA. It isn't a trick. I'm not deceiving you,—really!

WYATT. You thought you could keep me from going—

[HOOKER, *distraught and unkempt, staggers in from the trees to the right.*

HOOKER. Wyatt, Wyatt,—for God's sake, hide me!

WYATT. Good heavens! Why are you here?

HOOKER [*catching sight of* GILDA]. Who's that? The Gillespie girl! My God! I shall never escape. You've got him here—Gillespie—you've got him waiting to catch me!

WYATT. Hooker, Hooker—my dear chap—pull yourself together.

HOOKER. Send her away! She's a devil. They're all devils. They're after me, Wyatt. Gillespie will get me, I'm sure.

WYATT. Come here, man! Sit down.

HOOKER. I—close to her? No, no! And her eyes are green, green, green! It'll drive me crazy [*chuckling*]. "I daresay it will," he said.

GILDA. He's out of his mind—mad! I'll help you! What shall we do?

HOOKER [*to himself*]. Mad, mad—not mad, no.

WYATT. Poor little devil! [*trying to soothe* HOOKER]. What's wrong, Hooker? Tell me about it.

HOOKER [*collapsing into the chair which* GILDA *has left*]. You won't let her touch me, Wyatt? She's come here to spy on me. She's a low mean spy.

WYATT. She isn't spying on *you*.

HOOKER. It's the jungle,—the jungle and the moon. I thought it might not be so green by moonlight. [*whispering*] Every leaf is green!

GILDA. There must be a bed indoors. We'll get him to sleep.

WYATT. I'm afraid I stripped it.

GILDA. Look after him, then, while I make it. I'll find the things. [GILDA *goes quickly into shanty.*

HOOKER [*rousing himself*]. What did she mean,—get me to sleep? They think they can finish me then. [*confidentially*] I say though,—she has'nt learned yet. Gillespie's in hell!

WYATT. Oh? Where did you hear that?

HOOKER. Don't you believe it? I saw him.

WYATT. Then I don't see why you're afraid.

HOOKER. What a good chap you are! But they left the door open. I saw him through a chink. He'll

come out: I'm certain he will. He'll never leave me.—I say,—I'm tired.

WYATT. Where have you been? What have you been doing? [HOOKER *has risen wearily.*] Don't go, Hooker!

HOOKER. I thought I bored you. Smith called me a bore. But I won't stay. I dare not. He's just round the corner,—in Tenth Street. He's the chief cashier, you know, and if he caught me with these bills . . .

WYATT. Have you been out in the jungle?

HOOKER. Out in the jungle, Wyatt. The world's a jungle, and nobody knows the way through. It's the greenness, Wyatt, these huge interminable green plants. I can't stand it. And then there was nothing to eat.

WYATT. Is that it? I'll get you some food.

HOOKER [*tearfully*]. You mustn't leave me. Oh, please don't leave me!

WYATT. But how can I—? All right.

[GILDA *reappears at the door.*

WYATT. Is it ready?

GILDA. Yes.

HOOKER. There she is—the Gillespie girl!

WYATT [*taking him by the arm*]. Come in here, and try to sleep.

HOOKER. No, no, not in there!

WYATT. But you're tired. You said so.

HOOKER. Not in there. It's a trap. I know the

Gillespies. They'll fetch a policeman round, and he'll take me off in the van. Gillespie's in there! Can't you see him—just round the door! There!

GILDA. He is nowhere near you. Go in.

WYATT [*coaxingly*]. Now, Hooker, the way to evade him is to lie low,—like Brer Fox. If you go in there, you can hide yourself. He'll mistake you for me. He'd never catch you in there.

HOOKER. It's a frightful risk.

WYATT [*imperatively*]. Go along!—[*to* GILDA] Get him some food,—there's a good girl.

GILDA. Which way?

WYATT. There on the left,—in a cupboard.

[GILDA *goes to the door.*

HOOKER. She's going in. She'll kill me. I know the Gillespies.

WYATT [*to* GILDA]. Wait here a minute. Come along, Hooker. You've got to sleep,—sleep, do you hear? And you know you can trust me, don't you?

HOOKER. I'll go very softly.—Don't you come near me!

[*Eyeing* GILDA *apprehensively, he goes indoors with* WYATT, *elaborately keeping as far as possible from the girl.* SORIANO *enters quickly from the right.*

SORIANO [*to* GILDA]. You stop! Where is Arthur? What have you do?

GILDA. He's indoors. Hooker has come here—crazy.

SORIANO. Crazy?

GILDA. Yes,—mad! Go for the doctor,—Doctor Wise. It's very very serious.

SORIANO. Go? I do not go.—Arthur!

WYATT [*coming out*]. Oh, Garcia,—there you are. Run for the doctor. You know where he lives . .

SORIANO. Hooker is there? He is mad?

WYATT. Yes, yes. We ought to tell Wise.

GILDA. I'll go in now,—shall I? to get the food?

WYATT. Yes, go. I'll come in a moment. [GILDA *goes quickly indoors.*] It's a queer thing,—Gillespie's work, the damned bully!

SORIANO. It is all right? It is fair play? No tricks?

WYATT. Not a chance of it. The poor fool's raving.

SORIANO. Arthur, you tell the girl nothing? She is no good.

WYATT. That's all right, Garcia. I've got my wits about me, and I need them! Go for Wise,—Dr Wise.

SORIANO [*thrusting his gun into* WYATT's *hand*]. Take this. Take it.

WYATT. No, no, I've got a revolver. Make haste!

HOOKER [*within*]. Go away! Go away! Wyatt! Wyatt!

WYATT. What the devil—

GILDA [*coming out distressed*]. Come quickly. He won't let me bring it. He—I only wanted to help. [WYATT *goes in*, GILDA *watching him from the door.* SORIANO *hesitates before he leaves, wishing to rid Wyatt of a dangerous visitor.*

SORIANO. It is not good behaviour to come here in the night. What you mean, eh? You are a bad girl to come here in the night. You think 'My great eyes will make Arthur love me.' You go now,—you go, you . . . bad girl!

GILDA [*to herself*]. What can have driven him crazy? Something to do with Dad!

SORIANO. It is necessary that I go now. You bad girl!

GILDA [*turning*]. I'm not bad—I'm sure I'm not!

SORIANO. Your father makes the Hooker a mad. Why do you stay? Here no one wishes you. We do not love bad people, no.

GILDA. Quickly,—the doctor, the doctor!

SORIANO. It is not right. Your beautiful eyes—

GILDA. Quickly!

SORIANO. I bring the doctor. He take you home.

[*Exit* SORIANO, *right*.

HOOKER [*within*]. I want sleep, I want sleep.

WYATT [*turning to him from the door*]. That's right. Sleep round the clock. I'll leave you awhile.

[*He comes forward*.

GILDA. Mr Wyatt, tell me something?

WYATT. What?

GILDA. Tell me the truth,—I shan't be angry. Why do you all dislike my father so much? He has done something to Hooker. Do you know what it is?

WYATT. Hooker has told me,—but surely you know yourself?

GILDA. I don't. I'm afraid to know; but I must!

WYATT. He's threatened to make him work with the niggers,—work as one of the gang under Gottmann.

GILDA. He—a white man? But you can't believe what he says. And besides, he couldn't stand it. He's much too weak.

WYATT. And what does Gillespie care about that? I tell you that Hooker's to work with the niggers at dawn.

GILDA. I can't believe it. You've got a spite against dad . . .

HOOKER [*within*]. Don't! I didn't forge them. I only housed them—

WYATT [*going to the door*]. Go to sleep, man!

HOOKER [*within*]. Boss,—don't be unkind!

GILDA. Unkind!

HOOKER [*within*]. I did my best,—really.

WYATT. Go to sleep, I tell you,—at once!

GILDA. If this were true . . . [*She hears* HOOKER *uttering inarticulate sounds.*] That moaning! Poor little chap! You must tell me the whole truth, Mr Wyatt. I must get to the bottom of this. It may make all the difference to me.

WYATT. Do you want me to tell you what I know about Gillespie? Really?

GILDA. Everything, everything!

WYATT. You'll admit that the niggers work wonderfully well . . .

GILDA. Yes, yes . . . ?

WYATT. You shall know the reason. Slavery—here in Brazil—was put down by law last year. Gillespie knows that, of course, and that's why he's bound to pay these fellows a pittance. Well, they're simple fools; they're like children. He gets them up to the Store; he makes them drunk and in that way he puts their money back in his own pocket. But he doesn't halt there—I'm simply telling the truth, Senorita. He runs them all into debt, and he keeps the debt mounting. Do you understand? He doesn't want them to pay. So long as they are in debt to him they are right in his power, poor devils! Of course, that's very good business, but it's that which made Mortlake threaten to rouse the niggers; and that's why he lost his life.

GILDA. I never knew this. Don't think I'm shamming. You do!

WYATT. I can't be sure what to think.

GILDA. Oh, I'm certain he didn't let Mortlake starve. It's impossible. But you said you had evidence.

WYATT. I have,—here.

GILDA. It would ruin my life. He can't have done it. What sort of evidence have you got?

WYATT. I couldn't have better.

GILDA. Don't show it me. Yes,—I want to see it. I must. You'll let me?

WYATT, That couldn't do any harm. Read this letter.

GILDA. Who wrote it? He?

WYATT. Mortlake. [GILDA *makes a movement to take the letter*]. No, no! You can read it here while I hold it. I don't want it torn in bits. [*While she is reading.*] An Indian brought it to me. You know I've wandered about in the jungle a good deal by myself, watching the ways of birds and insects. That's how the Indians got to know me . . .

GILDA. You swear it is Mortlake's hand?

WYATT. I have pages and pages like that. We kept a journal together.

GILDA. My God,—if it's true! [*desperately*]—But Gottmann—

WYATT. Gottmann never went near him. Garcia tracked your Gottmann. It wasn't a 'mangey Indian,'—it was Garcia. He went off to hunt by himself, and ran across Gottmann three miles in the wrong direction.

GILDA. Then it *is* true!

WYATT. I'm afraid there's no doubt.

HOOKER [*within*]. Don't be hard, boss. I'm sick, I'm sick . . .

GILDA [*breaking down*]. Oh, oh,—I couldn't believe it . . .

WYATT. Why, what's the matter?

GILDA. It's all true!

WYATT. You really think now that your father—

GILDA [*starting up*]. He's not my father!—I'm so ashamed of myself.

WYATT. You? You've done nothing wrong.

GILDA. But I nearly did. Oh, the beast!

WYATT [*impressed*]. Gilda Gillespie—

GILDA. I won't be called by that name. It's black with blood, it's verminous! You must call me Gilda,—you must, you must; for you've saved me from something frightful. What can I do to help you? I've made up my mind. I shan't change.

WYATT. I believe you mean this.

GILDA. I do. Ah, truly I do. I'm not the same now. I detest him. He's odious. You were right all the time.

WYATT. I wish you'd known sooner. Senorita—

GILDA. Gilda, Gilda!—No wonder you all hate me, no wonder.

WYATT. Hate you?—Gilda—

GILDA. What? What?

WYATT. I told you that Mortlake loved you . . . So did I.

GILDA. Me? You loved me!

WYATT. Yes, but *he* never guessed it.—And that's why I couldn't tell you to go.

GILDA. If you loved me still,—if you could!

WYATT. Gilda,—I do. Can't you feel it?

GILDA. But if you knew . . .

WYATT. Knew what?

GILDA. Nothing, nothing! I'm changed, I'm clean; I'm out of his grip, and I'll never go back.

WYATT. Never? What will you do?

GILDA. I'll never, never go back to him.

WYATT. You'll stay here,—with me?

GILDA. Let me!

WYATT. I'm only a man . . .

GILDA. Do what you like. Nothing matters.

WYATT. You mustn't say that.

GILDA. I mean it. I'm yours, if you'll have me,—your Gilda. I'm not forgetting myself, though I know you think me wild. So I am: but you love wild things, the butterflies and the birds that only follow their instincts. That's what I do. I want to be yours.

WYATT [*seizing her hands*]. Gilda,—you beautiful girl—I'm a pagan. I've made my own religion. There are no ten commandments in it.

GILDA. What do I care? You said you loved me. I want you!

WYATT. And I want you!

GILDA. Then . . .

WYATT [*straining her to himself*]. You are mine,—all of you, mine!

GILDA. Yes, yes! I was meant for your mate.

WYATT. Beautiful, passionate, wild sweet mate!

[*They kiss.*

How can I leave you? How can I go?

GILDA. If we go together . . . ?

WYATT. You will laugh,—but I can't afford it.

GILDA. Penniless lovers! But you'll come back, and you'll take me?

WYATT. What will you do now? I *must* go.

GILDA. To-night? Remember, remember!

WYATT. I *must* go, Gilda.

GILDA. Yes, go! I can save you! They intend to stop you somehow.

WYATT. I know.

GILDA. But they shan't. You must tell me how you are going. That's what they wish to find out; that's what they sent me to learn. Will you canoe up the river, or will you walk down the line? Tell me, tell me,—you know that I'm yours.

WYATT. I'm sure you are,—yes . . .

HOOKER [*appearing for a moment inside the doorway and looking out to the right in great fear*]. Wyatt, Wyatt, he's coming!

GILDA. Tell me, tell me!

WYATT [*looking out to the right*]. Who's that?

GILDA. Dear,—

WYATT. It's Garcia.

GILDA. How are you going?

SORIANO [*without*]. This way, this way.

WYATT [*moving a step from her*]. By Garcia's canoe, —up the river.

[*Enter* WISE *and* SORIANO *from the jungle, right.*

WISE [*seeing* GILDA]. Hullo! Damned odd! You here?

WYATT, That's all right, doctor, she came with a message.

WISE. Well, well, *I* haven't seen her. Where's the patient?

WYATT. In here. Pretty bad, I'm afraid.

WISE [*as they go towards the shanty*]. Queer fellow—your friend.—[*To* SORIANO] Yes, you!—I thought he'd shoot me.

SORIANO [*smiling*]. No, doctor, oh no!

WISE [*going in*]. Well, now for the fun. [*To* GILDA] You too, girl, come along. You may be useful.

[*They go indoors.* GILDA *remains outside. She starts forward a few steps; then halts irresolutely.*

GILDA. Up the river, he said . . .

WISE [*within*]. Well, where the devil *is* he?

WYATT [*within*]. We ought to have watched him.

SORIANO [*within*]. Out there in the trees, perhaps?

GILDA [*softly*]. By canoe—up the river . . . I'll save him—I will, I will!

[*Quickly and noiselessly, she goes out, right.*

WYATT [*within*]. I heard him a minute ago . . .

SORIANO [*coming out*]. You have seen Hooker?—*Dios!* Arthur! Arthur!

WYATT [*at the door*]. What? Is he there?

SORIANO. The girl has gone!

WYATT. Gone? Gone? She has tricked me! My God, what a fool I was. I believed her.

SORIANO [*in great agitation*]. You told her everything? [*with exasperation*]. Hoh! that's what they wanted!

WYATT [*regretfully, to himself*]. It was her beauty . .

SORIANO. Arthur, what have you said? You have told her which way you go?

WYATT [*laughing bitterly*]. Yes, Garcia,—more or less!

SORIANO. My friend!

WYATT. You were just in the nick of time.

SORIANO. I? How?

WYATT. I told her a lie, thank God! Up the river, I said.

WISE [*returning through the shanty*]. He's not there, Wyatt . . .

CURTAIN

Act III

SCENE: GILLESPIE'S *General Store, as in Act I. A few minutes before dawn. At the larger table* GILLESPIE *and* GOTTMANN *are seated, mechanically playing cards. They are manifestly tired and irritable.*

GOTTMAN My game, boss. That makes two up. Well, here goes . . .

[*He begins to deal out the cards.*

GILLESPIE. I've had enough. I'm sick of the sight of them.

GOTTMANN. You said your limit was ten dollars.

GILLESPIE. You've pocketed eight. Aren't you content? I say, I'm sick of them.

GOTTMANN [*gathering up the cards*]. Well, I'm feeling a bit dog-eared myself.

[*He puts them down with a bang.*

GILLESPIE. Look out what you're doing. First you spill your liquor all over the table—

GOTTMANN. That's *my* loss.

GILLESPIE. And then you dump the pack in the middle of all the slop, you clumsy idiot!

GOTTMANN. Keep your temper, boss. You can't do without me now.

GILLESPIE. I don't know about that. It looks damned likely that she won't return. That means that she failed. But the whole idea was ridiculous.

GOTTMANN. It wasn't mine.

GILLESPIE. No. You didn't exactly dazzle me with suggestions, did you? [*A short silence.* GOTTMANN *goes to the door and looks out.* GILLESPIE *remains at the table, drumming upon it with his fingers.*] Any sign of her?

GOTTMANN. No: but it's all dark still.

[*He returns to the table.*

GILLESPIE [*pushes a box of cigars towards him*]. Dig 'em out.

GOTTMANN. Thanks. No, I won't, damn it! I've smoked my tongue sore.

GILLESPIE. Why the devil doesn't she come?—Can't have lost the way. What do you think?

GOTTMANN. She's new to the job, eh? first time? I expect she's feeling a bit less perky.

GILLESPIE. If she failed, we're done for,—done for, absolutely. I don't see what else I could have tried . . .

GOTTMANN. If she failed, she'd have been back here now. No, boss, it's plain that he didn't reject the charmer.

GILLESPIE [*going to the door*]. He may have started already. It can't be far from dawn; but the stars are out still. Damned little fool! What on earth's the girl doing? She ought to have got through with it and been back an hour ago—don't yawn like that! [*He returns to the table.*

GOTTMANN. And how do you want me to yawn! I've a right to my own way.

GILLESPIE. Look here, Gottmann,—we must cut the cackle and do something.

GOTTMANN [*dryly*]. Exactly. What?

GILLESPIE. I'm not going to risk my whole career on a single line of attack. I'll give her a few more minutes—until the first glimmer of dawn —and if she's not back then, we'll chance it.

GOTTMANN. How do you mean?

GILLESPIE. Can't you see? He *must* go one way or the other. If you take the railway, let's say, it's an equal chance that you catch him or miss him. So far as I can see you had better try that. You see, the railway—

GOTTMANN. Oh, come now, boss—

GILLESPIE. He'd think we shouldn't expect him there—

GOTTMANN. We've hammered all that right in. It won't go any further. We've met stone.

GILLESPIE. And you still believe that he'll try the river?

GOTTMANN. I'm sure of it.

GILLESPIE. Well, I'm not; and nothing you've said at present has shunted my view . . .

GOTTMANN. All right, all right! I'll take any course you think best.

GILLESPIE. And Wyatt will take the other. Yet I don't know . . . we might succeed.

GOTTMANN. We might and we might not. Hang it all! Why won't you black your own boots?

GILLESPIE. Oh, *that* again!

GOTTMANN. Yes, that! If she doesn't come back, there's a risk whatever we do. Share the job like a man, and let them all think what they will. Take the railway, and I'll take the river!

GILLESPIE. As if we hadn't washed that thin!

GOTTMANN. Well, you'd make sure of your man.

GILLESPIE. And sure of losing the whole job here.

GOTTMANN. There's a risk anyway . . .

GILLESPIE. If Wyatt's killed and I'm known to have been away at the time, there's no risk,—none! I might as well call Amen. I shall have my hands full to explain *your* absence again. Damnation! What slippery fools women are! You can't trust them. They're all whims and poetry.

GOTTMANN. They're right enough in their place—under the mistletoe.

GILLESPIE [*at the door*]. I can't make it out. What's become of her? The stars are fading. Gottmann,—get ready to go!

GOTTMANN. And when I'm gone, she'll arrive. It's always like that. Take your umbrella and it doesn't rain. Leave your umbrella—

GILLESPIE. Light! Over there!

GOTTMANN [*joining him*]. Is it really?

GILLESPIE. The dawn,—it's beginning.

GOTTMANN. Where? Yes: that's our old friend. Not a sign of her?

GILLESPIE. That settles it. Gottmann, you under-

stand—you can shoot once only. Keep a look-out for spies,—Indians. The beggar might make them scout for him. Your job's to finish him off,—no bungling!

GOTTMANN. You bet!

GILLESPIE. And look here, Gottmann! I know when a man's my friend. I'm a good friend and a bad enemy. If you pack him up tight and put a seal on the package, you're a made man. I'll give you Gilda. D'you hear? I'll get her to marry you.

GOTTMANN. Thanks, boss: not for me. Not her sort.

GILLESPIE. What the deuce do you mean?

GOTTMANN. What I say. I don't take chuck-outs.

GILLESPIE. Well, I'm damned!

GOTTMANN. Mrs G. must be pure and innocent. I don't want another man's brats.

GILLESPIE. You're throwing away the finest chance that you'll ever get. There'll be some dainty words about this to-morrow. Cut along now! It's our only hope. We must risk the railway.—And I must get to the works.

GOTTMANN. I ought to catch him about a mile up the line,—if he's gone there at all.

GILLESPIE. A mile at the outside. Half an hour, and the job's done,—even less perhaps.

GOTTMANN. I never expected this, you know.

GILLESPIE. Why, what—what?

GOTTMANN. To shoot a man dead,—it wasn't at all in my scheme of life.

GILLESPIE. Thank your stars if you bring it off. Nobody likes this kind of thing.

GOTTMANN [*at the door*]. I say!

GILLESPIE. Well?

GOTTMANN. There she is!

GILLESPIE [*hurrying toward him*]. Gilda? Really? Yes. If we're not too late!

GOTTMANN. What news? What news? You believe in leisure, don't you?

[GILDA *comes in, from the back.*

GILLESPIE. Gilda, Gilda, what the devil have you been doing?

GOTTMANN. Obeying your orders, of course.

GILLESPIE. Don't stand there like a cow. What's the news? Which way is he going?—Well? Gilda!

GILDA. I'm tired.

GILLESPIE. Yes, yes—no doubt. But say just a word —is it the railway-line?

GILDA [*purposely procrastinating*]. I could see the stars going out—one by one—as I came.

GOTTMANN. Oh, I say—

GILDA. But I did, Gottmann,—really!

GILLESPIE. My dear child, bury that nonsense. We'll talk about stars later on. Don't you realize that you've kept us dawdling here till the very last possible moment?

GILDA. Is it really so late?

GILLESPIE. Gottmann!—Look here, lass, you're

driving me silly. Wyatt's gone by now,—gone, started on his way. Can't you understand me?

GOTTMANN. Out with it, Gilda!

GILDA. Gilda? From you?

GILLESPIE. Oh, never mind him. Is it the railway or is it the river? What did the fellow say?

GILDA. I'll tell you in time.

GILLESPIE. In time?—That's just what I mean . . .

GOTTMANN. It won't be in time!

GILDA. I've had a long walk, remember.

GILLESPIE. Good heavens! Will you speak out? or I'll thrash you!

GILDA. Is that my reward?

GILLESPIE. Well, do you know which course he's taking, or don't you? Did you *fail?* Tell us that!

GILDA. I did find out what you want.

GILLESPIE. Good! And how's he going?

GILDA. He is going . . . [*She pauses in order to tantalize them the more.*

GOTTMANN. Well?

GILLESPIE. Yes . . . ?

GOTTMANN. By canoe—up the river?

GILLESPIE. Gottmann!

GILDA. He is going to walk up the railway line to San Juan.

GILLESPIE. You know that—for certain?

GILDA. He told me himself.

GILLESPIE. And you're sure it wasn't a trick—to mislead us?

GILDA. I'm sure . . . he told me the truth.

GOTTMANN. That's good enough, boss. They went pretty far: you can see that.

GILDA. He told me the truth,—I'd swear it!

GILLESPIE. I was right after all, then. The railway, —I told you he would. Get off. We've no time to spare.

GILDA. He might go armed.

GOTTMANN. So shall I!

GILDA. Your revolver—where is it? Good. [*She takes it up from the table*]. Shall I load it? Let me. [*She proceeds to charge the revolver.*

GOTTMANN. You don't seem to mind grim work. That bullet's on business.

GILDA. I am not afraid of what it will do.

GILLESPIE. You're the right breed, lassie! You've blood in your veins. You don't mind a bullet now, eh? You don't want to spare him now? I'm not surprised.

GILDA. Ah, you don't know what happened between us!

GILLESPIE. Poor kid! But there, you'll have a speedy revenge. We'll put it right for you, Gilda.—Ready there?

GOTTMANN. All trim. So long!

GILLESPIE. One shot only, Gottmann. Gilda's bullet will finish him.

GILDA. Don't hang about,—you may miss him. Shoot straight.

GOTTMANN. So long!

GILDA. The railway!

[*Exit* GOTTMANN *through door, back.*

GILLESPIE. Good lass! You've gone through with it well, you have indeed. Feeling done up? You'll soon forget it, and Gottmann won't blab. Have something to drink! [GILDA *sits down at the table, and begins to laugh with hysterical joy*]. Gilda, what's up? Ah, reaction,—of course. You mustn't take it to heart—

GILDA. Oh, don't make me laugh any more!

GILLESPIE. Gilda, child,—that's enough. You're hysterical. And it's no laughing matter,—a man's death, you know. Stop laughing,—stop it!

GILDA. A man's death! You don't understand what I've done.

GILLESPIE. That's better. I understand quite enough, Gilda. You must know that I'm sorry it had to be done—like that. But don't be upset. Arthur Wyatt will make no mischief now.

GILDA. No, no; he won't, will he? Gottmann has gone to the railway, so that's all right. It couldn't have run more smoothly.

GILLESPIE. Thanks to you, lass, it couldn't.

GILDA. Poor Gottmann!

GILLESPIE. I shouldn't waste sympathy on Gottmann. He's what in 'Frisco we used to call a chewing-gum. You can never finish him. He's got no soul.

GILDA. But you don't believe in the soul? I do.

GILLESPIE. Well, you go along to bed and take a bit of rest. I must go and visit the men, but I'll tell you when Gottmann comes.

GILDA. He may be a long while yet.

GILLESPIE. Off with you now—to bed. We don't think any the worse of you.

GILDA. Really?

GILLESPIE. Come now: give me a kiss.

GILDA. A kiss? No, not to-night.

GILLESPIE. Well, well; you're not feeling yourself. It wasn't a pleasant job, I'm sure. Go along,—go in!

GILDA. No, I think not. We've a good deal to talk about together, my guardian and I!

GILLESPIE. I'm sorry, lass. There was really no other way. I wouldn't have tried that, if it hadn't been desperate for us all.

GILDA. Oh, I'm not angry about that. There are worse men than Mr Wyatt.

GILLESPIE. No doubt, no doubt. I'm glad all the same. That made it easier.

GILDA. Yes: we got on very well.

GILLESPIE. H'm! Then what do you want to say?

GILDA. I'll tell you in time, but I don't think the time's quite come. How long, would you say, will your friend Gottmann take?

GILLESPIE. Oh, it all depends. You see, he'll go fairly well up the line—about half a mile, I

should think: otherwise he might get there when Wyatt had passed. But Wyatt has further to walk before he touches the line—

GILDA. Yes, a long way. It will take him a very great time.

GILLESPIE. Oh, come now; it's not so far as all that.

GILDA. Then we ought to hear the news in about half an hour?

GILLESPIE. Less,—less than that.

GILDA. All the better . . . You don't understand what I've done.

GILLESPIE. Tell me, lassie. I ought to be going, but I'll wait a few minutes.

GILDA. Would you like to hear all my adventure from the very beginning?

GILLESPIE. Eh? Not now. But I didn't expect it would leave you as merry as this. In fact, I was looking for water-works.

GILDA. I suppose you've never cried. Have you?

GILLESPIE. It's a pretty notion.

GILDA. Not even with disappointment? Not even with rage? If Gottmann should make some mistake? If he does!

GILLESPIE. He won't, lass. But tell me what happened. You had to—I mean, it was a matter of playing your trump ace, eh?

GILDA. Oh, how can you talk like that? It's hateful.

GILLESPIE. Come, come; you call me your dad.

GILDA. That word has gone sour.

GILLESPIE. What do you mean?

GILDA. Mr Wyatt told me something about the niggers here, and about you.

GILLESPIE. Indeed? I should like to hear it.

GILDA. Would you? You look bored,—but you won't be bored very long!

GILLESPIE. What's this?

GILDA. You know how much I admire keen business ability. Mr Wyatt said that you're wonderful in your management of the negroes. In fact, he told me that you make a practice of running them all into debt—heavily into debt—so that you shall have them completely within your grip.

GILLESPIE. You have to get used to a good deal in business.

GILDA. Then you admit that you do this?

GILLESPIE. What? Yes,—yes, I do. You don't understand. Everyone's got to fend for himself in this world, you know.

GILDA. You've saved me a lot of trouble, I was wondering how I could prove his charge. Perhaps you will stop cutting your nails when you learn that I look upon that as about the vilest abuse of intelligence and power that I've ever heard of in all my life.

GILLESPIE. You're a schoolgirl, Gilda. Listen—

GILDA. You swindle these wretched creatures because they're ignorant and can't think. That's what you call good business. I daresay it is, and

I know that it's men like you who control the world now: but what kind of world will it be when you and your like have done with it? I begin to hate men.

GILLESPIE. What the devil has all this to do with you? That's what I want to know. You don't understand the world. You think it's all soul and poetry; but you'll learn.

GILDA. I've had a good teacher in you.

GILLESPIE. You're overwrought. Go to bed.

GILDA. No: we haven't finished our talk. There's Hooker.

GILLESPIE. And what do you know about Hooker? I suppose young Wyatt got hold of the news that I'm going to try stiff measures with that little ass,—eh?

GILDA. Is Hooker to work with the blacks?

GILLESPIE. Yes,—he can't make them work for him. Have you got your sermon on that? Wyatt ought to have been a missionary. I'm putting up with a lot. Gilda, because you've had a rough time, but even the worm will turn.

GILDA. You—you—the worm? That's funny! No, Hooker's the worm and you're the hobnailed boot. Bluster with men like Hooker,—you can't frighten me.

GILLESPIE. I shall do with Hooker what I think best. Mind your own business, girl! Hooker shall work with the blacks.

GILDA. I very much doubt it.

GILLESPIE. Oh? And who will prevent it? You?

GILDA. The doctor.

GILLESPIE. Old Wise? Ha!

GILDA. You don't seem to know what you've done. You've behaved so villainously to Hooker that you've sent him clean out of his mind. He's mad,—raving.

GILLESPIE. Hooker? Mad? You don't mean it! A bit upset . . .

GILDA. No,—mad! So you've that on your conscience,—if you have any conscience at all.

GILLESPIE. I've warned you, child—

GILDA. I'm not afraid of you.

GILLESPIE. How do you know this?

GILDA. I saw him to-night.

GILLESPIE. At Wyatt's?

GILDA. Yes: he came for protection from you,—and from me, me, if you please! He thought the Gillespies were all alike. He wouldn't let me go near him. He thought we were all unscrupulous bullies, blood-suckers, vampires, devils, the black scum of the world!

GILLESPIE. Look out! You carry my name.

GILDA. Like a mill-stone, like a hump on my soul that I couldn't get rid of. But I will. I've no right to the name, and I'm proud of that for the first time. I refuse to be branded with a name that belongs to a scoundrel,—and a murderer!

GILLESPIE. I won't kill you, girl,—by God, I won't!

GILDA. No, I've not turned my back. And it wouldn't be business either. You kill men out in the jungle when they're weak for want of food and are down with the yellow fever. You don't strike—everyone can detect a murder like that—but a man may starve in the jungle, and no one be any the wiser. If you kill me now—

GILLESPIE [*controlling himself*]. Don't be absurd! I've listened enough. Get off!

GILDA. You're not such a fool as to kill me. Perhaps you'll beg Gottmann to do it, if I give you a chance: but I won't. You murdered Mortlake, and you ought to swing on the gallows.

GILLESPIE. And I know where *you* ought to be! Your market-value's gone down.

GILDA. You dare call me that?

GILLESPIE. If Wyatt's the first, he won't be the last.

GILDA. So you think I had to play my trump-card, as you call it?

GILLESPIE. Well, what do you think? You'll need a power of proof to alter my view.

GILDA. As much as the proof that you killed James Mortlake?

GILLESPIE. Then you know his proof? What was it?

GILDA. A letter from Mortlake. I saw it myself. I read it. If Wyatt should get to Pará, you won't be free to send people mad any longer.

GILLESPIE. If he gets to Pará? He won't!

GILDA. You're certain?

GILLESPIE. He'll have got to Heaven by now.

GILDA. I wonder.

GILLESPIE. Well, he won't be long, anyway.

GILDA. You're slow for a business man.

GILLESPIE. How do you mean?

GILDA. You don't see?

GILLESPIE. See what, girl?

GILDA. So Gottmann's now on the railway-line, sneaking among the bushes and waiting for Arthur Wyatt to walk into the trap!

GILLESPIE. I daresay it's done.

GILDA. I think that's very unlikely.

GILLESPIE. You've got something up your sleeve. What is it?

GILDA. Well, you see, when I'd played the part that you gave me and had won my way into Wyatt's good faith, he told me which course he was going to follow.

GILLESPIE. Yes, yes, we know that.

GILDA. But I didn't tell you his actual words. Would you like to hear them?

GILLESPIE. I really don't care. What were they?

GILDA. I asked him 'How are you going?' and he said—now guess! What do you think he said?

GILLESPIE. Well, what?

GILDA. 'By Garcia's canoe—up the river!'

GILLESPIE. Good God! Is that true? You're joking!

GILDA. True, true, true! Ah, you'll never get at

him now! I've saved him. It was hard to come back, but I'm glad I came.

GILLESPIE [*having rushed to the door*]. Gottmann, Gottmann!

GILDA. That's no good. Mr Wyatt's out of your grasp!

GILLESPIE. Too late! D'you know what you've done? You've ruined me. I'm ruined. You say you've seen Mortlake's letter. The Directors will see it. Suppose they take action . . . they might not,—they know what I'm worth . . .

GILDA. And suppose they do nothing? Will Wyatt leave it with them? He'll give the whole story to the newspaper at Pará. They'll be forced to act.

GILLESPIE. Public opinion,—damn! The river, you say,—the river . . . There must be something to do. No, not now. If you'd told me this earlier—

GILDA. He would never have escaped. That's just why I didn't.

GILLESPIE. It's hopeless. Gilda, you've betrayed me, fooled me, blown up my career. Low treachery —that's what it is. Here you've kept me jabbering while the man gets off. Was that why you trumped up these accusations against me? To win time for your fancy-boy! It was that, was it? And you aren't ashamed of yourself!

GILDA. No, I'm not ashamed. Are you?

GILLESPIE. You don't deserve mercy, and you won't get it.

GILDA. What are you going to do?

GILLESPIE. So you're frightened now, are you?

GILDA [*in terror*]. No. Not a bit.

GILLESPIE. I'm going to teach you the danger of swindling a man like me. I'm not used to gloves. I find the bare fist a good enough argument.

GILDA. Dad . . .

GILLESPIE. Eh? Eh?

GILDA. You don't mean to kill me . . .

GILLESPIE. Kill you? Of course not.

GILDA. You do!

GILLESPIE. You've driven me to this. You can't expect kindness from a man you've broken in two, and after he's housed you, fed you, clothed you, and all for nothing, for no return, for nothing whatever. And why did I pick you out of the gutter? What are you? My brother sowed his wild oats, out there in Chili, and you're the harvest. You're an illegitimate, and you ought to be out on the streets. That's the right place for your kind, and that's where you'll end, for all I care. You don't get a mouthful from me any more. Don't think it . . .

GILDA. I shouldn't accept it!

GILLESPIE. Smashed up,—smashed up by you! There's gratitude. And all because you're a low woman who believes whatever is said by the first man who rapes you. You'll follow him up to Pará, perhaps? You've made him promise to

marry you, eh? That's what they commonly do —your kind: but you'll never get to Pará, not if I know it. The river doesn't run that way. It'll carry you down to Bolivia, not by canoe . . . Great heavens! You, you, you—to take it upon yourself to avenge that idiot Mortlake . . .

GILDA. And Hooker and the niggers and Arthur Wyatt. I haven't done this for one man. I used to love you! Was it easy to change? Didn't I believe in you just as long as ever I could? It's not easy to change the heart. And now you can kill me, if you dare,—but that would be foolish.

GILLESPIE. You're afraid.

GILDA. I don't want to die—that's all. And you'd be foolish—

GILLESPIE. Chuck that, I say! I don't need advice. I know what I mean to do. I've a just cause. Now, then— [*He rushes at* GILDA. *She evades him, but is driven into the corner of the room in which the map hangs.* GILLESPIE *follows her. Seeing that she is captured, he pauses for an instant.* GILDA *catches up a piece of iron from the table in front of her.* Down with that! I've got you now!

[*The door at the back opens. Enter* WISE, *pulling* HOOKER *along by a coat-sleeve. The latter is now quite insane, and does not realize where he is. Throughout the ensuing scene he mutters to himself almost continuously, and shows frequent signs of sudden horror and apprehension.*

WISE. Gillespie . . . Hullo, hullo,—what's up? What the deuce are you doing, Gillespie?

GILLESPIE [*turns, and takes a few steps towards the doctor*]. Clear out, Wise.

WISE. No. You look dangerous.

GILLESPIE. I am.

WISE. Senorita, what is the matter?

GILDA. He wants to kill me!

GILLESPIE. It's a lie.—[*to* WISE] You know me better . . .

WISE. I see, I see. You're too hard on her—

GILLESPIE. Cut that! [*pointing to* HOOKER]. What's the meaning of this?

WISE. Just what I want to know.

GILDA. You've brought him *here?*

HOOKER. Terrible, terrible . . .

GILDA. What is he saying?

HOOKER. Terrible . . .

WISE. The usual nonsense. Come along, Hooker. Sit down!

[WISE *leads him to the table, left, and* HOOKER *sinks dully into a chair.*

GILLESPIE. Can't you take him elsewhere? I don't want him.

WISE. I don't suppose anybody wants him,—or ever did, poor fool. Soriano dragged me to Wyatt's place—Hooker gone mad, he told me: —got, there didn't find him. Looked everywhere. Not a trace . . .

HOOKER. Ah, no, no!

[GILDA *goes over to him and tries to comfort him.*

WISE. Then I came back. Saw this fellow flying toward me out of the forest,—bleeding. A few minutes back,—just now. Must have been up in the direction of the line . . .

GILLESPIE. The railway?

HOOKER. It's terrible . . .

GILDA. What's terrible, Hooker?

WISE. Oh, nothing that we can know of. Says he saw something frightful, I don't know.

GILLESPIE. That's queer,—on the railway line.

GILDA. Tell us about it, Hooker. Then it won't be so bad.

WISE. You see? Hardly hears you.

GILLESPIE. There's nothing to see there at this time. It's damned queer, though.

WISE. Delusion, of course. He saw nothing. Only fancies he did.

HOOKER. And there was blood on the green . . .

GILLESPIE. What do you want me to do?

WISE. Do? What d'you think? Can't leave the beggar out there in a state like this.

HOOKER. Dead, dead . . . it's terrible.

GILDA. Don't think of it, Hooker. Who's dead? You're safe now, whatever you saw.

WISE [*to* GILDA]. That's right. You do what you can.

GILLESPIE. I'm not unreasonable, but what do you want? I've enough on my hands already.

WISE. You're boss here. Responsible for us all. Don't forget that.

GILLESPIE. Oh, damn you,—I've had enough preaching.

HOOKER. Dead—in a pool of blood—dead . . .

GILDA. A man, Hooker? Was it a man?

GILLESPIE. Look here, I don't like this—

WISE. Not amusing, I know. Sleep—that's what he wants. I must have a bed.

GILLESPIE. Oh, all right.

GILDA. He can have mine. I shan't need it again.

GILLESPIE. What's that?

WISE. Good, good. In there?

HOOKER. I saw him—the forest, the forest, green, green, green . . .

GILDA. It makes me shudder.

WISE. Go through with it now!

GILDA [*to* HOOKER]. You're going to sleep.

HOOKER. Sleep!

GILDA. You'll be well in the morning and then you'll have quite forgotten it all. Come along! [*She helps* HOOKER *to stand, and leads him towards the door right.* HOOKER *follows mechanically.*

HOOKER [*to* GILLESPIE]. Thank you,—don't forget, though.

WISE. Do what she tells you. Go on!

HOOKER [*to* GILDA, *as they go out*]. You're very kind to me, very. Mother,—

GILDA. Come with me now. It's all right really.

HOOKER [*pleadingly*]. You won't let him break my soldiers, will you?

GILDA. No, no; of course I won't.

GILLESPIE. Get him along, for God's sake.

WISE. Let her do it her own way.

HOOKER. I shall never forget it, never, never! Killed! [GILDA *leads him out by the door, right.*

WISE. Can't recover. Impossible. Look here, Gillespie, we shall have to get him away somehow. Damned nuisance—the ship—we couldn't get there in time.

GILLESPIE. I don't care a hang what you do with him.

WISE. Capital. Blank cheque. Then I'll keep him here with your girl. She'll manage him. Give her something to do.

GILLESPIE. Don't you worry. She'll have plenty to do.

WISE. Gillespie,—it's none of my business, I know, but you shouldn't be hard on the girl. High-spirited—lonely—wanted a mate. It's natural.

GILLESPIE. My dear doctor—

WISE. Life's not so easy to live as it used to be. We're not so simple now. What we want is a new standard of morals that will fit the whole new world.

GILLESPIE. You're wasting time. I don't care a damn if the fellow seduced her. I wash my hands of her life.

WISE. That's bad. *Something's* upset you.

GILLESPIE. Leave me alone, man!

WISE. She's a good girl,—I'm sure she is. Hope she'll be happy too.

GILLESPIE [*to himself*]. Oh, do you? Damnation!

WISE. H'm I don't seem very tactful. Can't be helped. You make me think of a tiger,—up and down, up and down.

GILLESPIE. A tiger,—yes, in a cage.

WISE. What on earth can Hooker have seen . . .?

GILLESPIE. Nothing,—nothing of course.

WISE. I suppose it was nothing, but he sticks to it. Fixed idea. Pity. Obstinate case. Blood, he said. Thinks he saw somebody killed.

GILLESPIE. A scrap between niggers, I dare say.

WISE. H'm; I shall have to tackle it when he's had a bit of rest. Well, now, I must get him into his nightcap and pyjamas. Borrow a pair of yours. [*Twinklingly.*] They'll be a world too wide, though.

GILLESPIE. Hst! What's that?

[GARCIA SORIANO *bursts in from the door, back, in a state of extreme agitation. He carries his gun.*

SORIANO [*premonitorily*]. Ah,—you are here, you are here, Señor Gillespie.

GILLESPIE. Soriano,—what do you want?

SORIANO. I have much business.

WISE. You can do it without your gun. Put it down.

SORIANO. No,—no!

GILLESPIE. Do as you're told.

SORIANO. I want him!

WISE. No, no; no, no, no. I'm fond of guns. Let me look at him.

SORIANO. He is not for you, doctor. You have no fear.

WISE. Well, but I can't let you shoot the boss.

SORIANO. See you,—he has a revolver.

GILLESPIE. Give up your gun and I'll put this back.

SORIANO. I shoot not the doctor and I shoot not you.

WISE. Soriano, we'll have no shooting at all.

SORIANO. The girl,—she is where?

GILLESPIE. What do you want with her?

SORIANO. Don't you mind. I want her.

GILLESPIE. You can't see her. Clear out! Now then!

SORIANO. She is here?

WISE. Nursing a sick man,—Hooker. I found him.

SORIANO [*to* WISE *who is still trying to obtain the gun*]. Not yet, doctor. The girl—the girl Gillespie!

WISE. You want to shoot *her?*

GILLESPIE. If you don't give it up, I'll fire. No nonsense. You're Wyatt's friend, eh?

SORIANO. Wyatt,—Wyatt—ah, my friend, my friend, my best! Where is the girl? I will see her!

GILLESPIE. Look out! I'm going to fire.

WISE. You're not, Gillespie. Soriano, what's the matter? I'll put it straight.

SORIANO. You cannot. I come from the forest.

GILLESPIE. What the hell does it mean,—all this?

WISE. Been in the forest, have you? Seems to send everyone crazy.

SORIANO. I have seen a thing,—a thing terrible, terrible.

WISE. Hooker again!

GILLESPIE. What are you driving at?

SORIANO. He tells me I shall not go. But I go. I follow him up the railway-line. What do I see? I see him killed, you say,—dead. I touch him.

WISE. Who?

GILLESPIE. Who?

SORIANO. You ask me who? You do not know? I find him dead,—Arthur, my friend, my good boy!

GILLESPIE. Man alive! Wyatt,—you saw Wyatt,—Arthur Wyatt dead on the railway-line?

SORIANO. I mean that. I liked him very much, oh very, very much. A man have shoot him!

WISE. Good heavens!

GILLESPIE. D'you mean this? He went by the railway-line? You saw him?

SORIANO. It is the girl kills him. The girl, she—she—how do you say?—She tricks him, tricks him. I will shoot her dead!

GILLESPIE. Went by the railway! He did go by the railway!

WISE. Soriano, my friend, sit down and tell us—quite slowly—what you've seen. You're certain he's dead?

SORIANO. You cannot cure him. I like him,—I love him. Oh, his heart makes no move if I touch it. I shall see the girl. Gillespie, she is there?

WISE. Stop!

GILLESPIE. There are two of us here. Look out! Then,—after all . . . he went by the railway!

WISE. Eh?

SORIANO. He tells her not the truth. He thinks he is safe. My poor boy,—out there. I will see her!

[GILDA *enters from the door, right.*

GILDA. Doctor, he wants you . . .

SORIANO. Ah, she comes!

GILDA. Why, what—?

GILLESPIE. Duck your head! He'll shoot!

WISE [*trying to get hold of the gun*]. Now, now, now, —none of this!

HOOKER (*within*]. Gillespie!

SORIANO. Who is there?

GILDA. Go! Leave me with him. It's all right.

WISE. But we can't. He's armed!

HOOKER [*within*]. Gillespie, Gillespie!

GILLESPIE [*going to the door*]. What the deuce—He's out of bed. Hooker,—

[*He goes in.*

GILDA. Go, I tell you,—both of you. I'm not afraid.

WISE [*hesitating*]. You can't shoot a girl, Soriano! Come to your senses.

SORIANO. Not shoot a girl, you say . . . No,—no!

[*He lays the gun on the table in front of him.*

GILDA. I can manage him, doctor. He won't hurt me. You don't understand what has happened.

GILLESPIE [*from the other room*]. Wise,—come here!

WISE. I trust you then, Soriano. What's up? [*Disappearing through the door to the right.*] Hullo . . .

[*He goes into the next room.*

GILDA. Señor Soriano, what *do* you want? and why did you wish to shoot me? Oh, but I see, I see now! You thought I'd betrayed him. No, no, no, —I have saved him! I told them a lie. I said he was going up the railway-line.

SORIANO. You,—save him? It is not that! You kill him.

GILDA [*amused*]. Listen, listen . . .

SORIANO. 'Garcia, don't shoot a girl,' he say . . .

GILDA. Why can't I speak Spanish? Do understand, —I put them on the wrong track,—fooled them!

SORIANO. It is you kill him.

GILDA. I? But I love him!

SORIANO. He is dead.

GILDA. No, no, he's *not* dead.

SORIANO. You have kill him,—you!

GILDA [*with misgiving*]. Garcia—he went by the river—in your canoe.

SORIANO. Oh, no.

GILDA. Why, what do you mean?

SORIANO. He goes,—he goes by the railway line.

GILDA. By the—

SORIANO. He is dead, dead,—my boy! I have seen him,—shot.

GILDA. But he told me . . . Oh, he didn't mean it! He didn't trust me, not even then, not even then! He is dead . . . I've killed him. I—

[*She slips down at the table, sobbing.*

SORIANO. You are the girl. You do it. You—ah, what do I say?—you cheat him. And I love him much, oh much. You send him to die,—ah you! It is not possible that I tell you how much I hate you. I have no words . . .

GILDA. Kill me!

SORIANO. He says I am not to shoot a girl.

GILDA. I thought I had saved him.

SORIANO. What you mean? You try to save him . . .?

GILDA. He did not trust me. He told me a lie . . .

SORIANO. Yes, yes.

GILDA. I believed him.

SORIANO. You believe what he tells you? Ah—!

GILDA. Kill me, shoot me! I don't care now. My lover, my dear, my dear . . .

SORIANO. Poor girl!

GILDA. Oh, but he's dead. I've killed him. The bullet . . .

SORIANO [*kneeling down at the table*]. Pray to God for his soul.

GILDA [*springing up*]. Why, that's true . . . They have stopped his life, but a bullet can't touch his soul. The soul can never go out. It will last as long as the sun. It is greater than life,—life's only one of its many changes: and the real things happen out there!

SORIANO. He was my friend.

GILDA. Garcia,—take me to find him.

SORIANO. You have no heart.

GILDA. Don't say that of me. I dare not think of to-morrow, and the next day, and all the years after. Come with me, show me the way. We must find him, and then—what does it matter?

SORIANO. I will take care of you. I will hide you away in the trees.

GILDA. Out to the forest, to the trees! The trees are better than men . . . [*They go out at the back.*

GILLESPIE [*returning through the door, right*]. Well, you don't think he'll pull round? Hullo! They've gone!

WISE. Eh, eh? Gone?

[*Enter* GOTTMANN, *pale and shaken from the back.*

GOTTMANN [*collapsing at the table on to a chair*]. Ach, it's a dirty business. Give me a drink!

THE END

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